THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) to (d) There were 137 and 26 applications respectively pending for fixation of standard input output norms and DEPB rates. Though every effort is made to dispose of the applications within the time frame laid down, yet in some cases more time is taken for fixation of Standard Input Output Norms and DEPB rates because of deficient/incomplete information submitted by the applicants and time taken by the concerned Administrative Ministries/Departments in formulating their comments after detailed technical examination of the applications.

For expeditious disposal of applications, the technical information that are required for fixation of Input Outpur Norms and DEPB rates have been clearly laid down in the Exim Policy/procedures. Further the procedures are regularly simplified and streamlined to avoid delay in disposal of such proposals.

Import of foodgrains, vegetables, etc.

1218. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of quantity of foodgrains, vegetables, milk powder and tea imported during the period between 1st April, 2001 and 30th September, 2002;

(b) the names of the countries from where these commodities are imported; and

(c) the adverse effect on the prices of the domestic commodities, if any, during this period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) and (b) The details of country-wise data on imports of foodgrains, vegetables, milk powder and tea are contained in the publication "Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade of India: Volume-II (Imports)" published by Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, which is available in the library of the Parliament. Latest released issue rates to July 2002.

(c) There was no adverse effect on domestic prices of essential commodities including foodgrains, vegetables and tea due to imports.

Misuse of funds for development of NER

†1219. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a substantial part of the funds granted for development of the North Eastern Region is embezzled;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, whether Government are evolving a procedure to check misuse of these funds;

(c) if so, the details of such procedure; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) While there are frequent allegations to that effect, it is not possible to quantify the magnitude of seepage of development funds. Certain irregularities have been pointed out by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India in his reports.

(b) to (d) To ensure proper utilization of funds, the system of monitoring, sanctioning, release of funds and implementation has been tightened. Field inspections of works have been intensified and the Department of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) has also commenced monitoring of on-going projects. The State Governments have also been advised to ensure that programme/project specific funds are released to implementing agencies on time and regular monitoring of projects is undertaken. Only after receipt of utilization certificates, the second and subsequent installments are released. Further, on the request of DONER, the CAG has commenced audit of a few large projects during their execution itself.

Information about projects sanctioned by the North East Council (NEC) and under the Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) is available at website address www.necouncil.nic.in and www.northeast.nic.in, respectively. Details of projects included in the Prime Minister's package for the North East may be seen at website address www.pmindia.nic.in.

Funds for development of Assam

1220. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) the funds sanctioned for Assam during the years 2001-02 and 2002-03 and the amount released and utilized; and

(b) the steps being taken by Government for economic development of the State?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) The details of funds approved, released and utilized during the financial years 2001-02 and 2002-03 are annexed as statement (*See* below).